

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 SSM-03 IO-13 ACDA-07 AID-05 EUR-12 AF-10
TRSE-00 /107 W

-----100567 181554Z /40

R 181407Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3974
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 4510

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MARR, MPOL, SY, IS, US
SUBJECT: SYRIAN VIEW OF BEGIN VISIT

SUMMARY: SYRIANS ARE PLAYING DOWN CONCERN WITH THE BEGIN VISIT. THEY DOUBT BEGIN WILL COME TO TERMS WITHOUT US PRESSURE AND WHAT SYRIA AWAITS WITH ANTICIPATION IS THE US VIEW FOLLOWING BEGIN'S VISIT. SYRIANS ARE NOT SANGUINE THAT HE US WILL COME TO GRIPS WITH ISRAELI INTRANSIGENCE AND IN THAT CASE DAMASCUS MAY LOOK TO THE UN, EUROPE AND USSR FOR HELP. IN THE MEANTIME, SYRIA WILL REMAIN INFLEXIBLE ON QUESTIONS LIKE THE NATURE OF PEACE SINCE THEY FEEL THEY HAVE DONE ENOUGH TO PROVE THEIR SINCERITY. NOW IT IS THE TURN OF ISRAEL AND THE US. END SUMMARY

1. SYRIANS SEEM TO BE TAKING THE BEGIN VISIT WITH RELATIVE RESTRAINT. EDITORIAL POLICY OVER THE PAST WEEK HAS BEEN TO ADVISE PATIENCE. THE BEGIN VISIT, THE PAPERS EXPLAIN, IS THE FINAL STEP IN THE ROUND OF TALKS PRESIDENT CARTER HAS INITIATED BEFORE COMING TO AN
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AMERICAN CONCLUSION. THE PRESS HAS EXPRESSED DOUBTS, HOWEVER, THAT THE US WILL PUT ANY DISTANCE BETWEEN ITSELF AND THE ISRAELIS. IF THIS IS THE CASE, THE EDITORIALS POINT OUT THAT THERE ARE OTHER OPTIONS: THE UNSC AND UNGA, THE WEST EUROPEANS, THE SOVIET UNION, AND WAR. THE TONE HAS NOT BEEN BELLICOSE, FOR THE MESSAGE SEEMS TO BE THAT IF THE AMERICANS FAIL, THE DIPLOMATIC OPTION WILL STILL

BE VIABLE THROUGH OTHER CHANNELS. THE ONLY LOSS IN THAT CASE WILL BE THE US POSITION IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

2. THE PRESS HAS REPORTED BEGIN'S PREPARATIONS FOR THE TRIP AND HAS PRINTED ISRAELI PRESS "LEAKS" ON THE NATURE OF THE PLAN HE IS TAKING TO WASHINGTON. BUT THERE HAS BEEN NO EXTRAORDINARY PUBLIC CAMPAIGN TO VILLIFY BEGIN OR HIS PLAN. THE SYRIANS WE HAVE TALKED TO BOTH IN AND OUT OF GOVERNMENT HAVE ALL BUT GIVEN UP ON BEGIN. THEY ARE CONVINCED THAT HE IS A MAN OF DEEPLY HELD CONVICTIONS WHICH WILL MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR HIM TO AGREE WILLINGLY TO ANY JUST PEACE. SO WHAT BEGIN DOES IN WASHINGTON IS LARGELY IRRELEVANT.

4. THE IMPORTANT QUESTION FOR SYRIANS IS WHAT THE UNITED STATES IS WILLING TO DO IN TERMS OF CONFRONTING THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT. THE SYRIANS DO NOT SEEM TO THINK THAT WITHDRAWAL OF US MILITARY AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE FROM ISRAEL IN ORDER TO COMPEL ISRAELI FLEXIBILITY QUALIFIES AS AN IMPOSED SETTLEMENT. PRESIDENT AL-ASSAD TOLD CODEL HAMILTON THAT OF COURSE SYRIA DID NOT EXPECT THE US TO IMPOSE A PEACE, BUT IT SHOULD WITHHOLD AID AS AN DIS-INCENTIVE FOR WAR. IN THIS REGARD, THE SYRIANS HAVE A VERY DISTORTED VIEW OF HOW THE US WORKS POLITICALLY AND TEND TO ATTRIBUTE CHARACTERISTICS OF THEIR OWN REGIME TO AMERICA.

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4. UNLIKE PRESIDENT SADAT, SYRIA'S LEADERSHIP HAS NOT GONE OUT OF ITS WAY TO APPEAR FLEXIBLE IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS EVEN THOUGH ITS TONE HAS BEEN RESTRIANED. THE SYRIANS HAVE PROTESTED, HERE AND IN WASHINGTON, ISRAELI SETTLEMENT PLANS FOR THE GOLAN HEIGHTS. AND ASSAD AND KHADDAM TREATED CONGRESSMAN HAMILTON AND HIS COLLEAGUES TO AN UNYIELDING STATEMENT OF SYRIA'S POSITION ON THE NATURE OF PEACE. SYRIA BELIEVES IT HAS ALREADY GIVEN AMPLE GROUND TO PROVE ITS SINCERE DESIRE FOR NEGOTIATION. IT HAS AGREED TO NEGOTIATE AND IT HAS AGREED TO PEACE. IN RETURN, IN ITS EYES ISRAEL HAS INCREASED ITS DEMANDS BY REJECTING ANY WITHDRAWAL ON THE WEST BANK. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE CHANCES ARE VERY SLIM THAT THE SYRIANS WILL BE ANY MORE FORTHCOMING IN THE WEEKS AHEAD UNLESS ISRAEL OFFERS WHAT SYRIA CONSIDERS TO BE COMPROMISES OF EQUAL MAGNITUDE, OR UNLESS THE US SEEMS COMMITTED TO TACKLING THE ISRAELIS HEAD ON WITH RESPECT TO THE ISSUES OF WITHDRAWAL AND THE PALESTINIANS.
MURPHY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, HEAD OF GOVERNMENT VISITS, PEACE PLANS
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Sent Date: 18-Jul-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
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Subject: SYRIAN VIEW OF BEGIN VISIT SUMMARY: SYRIANS ARE PLAYING DOWN CONCERN WITH THE BEGIN VISIT. THEY DOUBT BEGIN WILL COME TO TERMS WITHOUT
TAGS: MARR, MPOL, OVIP, SY, IS, US, (BEGIN, MENAHEM)
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